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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Information Radio-Television Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2423

Aug. 11, 1989

FOOD COSTS -- Food prices increased 4.1 percent during 1988, the same rate they increased during 1987. However, the prices rose at a much higher rate in the second half of 1988 because of the severe drought and other market factors. The prices farmers received for commodities rose 3.6 percent. Farm value of foods had dropped in two of the previous three years. Source: "Food Cost Review, 1988." Contact: Denis Dunham (202) 786-1870.

NEW SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS -- The U.S. and the Soviet Union will begin negotiations on a new long-term grain purchase agreement during the week of Dec. 4 in Moscow. Deputy U.S. Trade Rep. Julius Katz is expected to lead the U.S. delegation. Under the current agreement, which ends Dec. 31, 1990, the USSR has agreed to buy at least 4 million metric tons each of U.S. wheat and corn each year and at least 1 million metric tons of wheat, corn, soybeans or soybean meal -- or any combination. The Soviet Union can buy an additional 3 million metric tons of U.S. wheat and corn, without consulting the U.S. Any further buys can be made only after consultation. Contact: Sally Klusaritz (202) 447-3448.

PALMS ON THE POTOMAC? Some scientists think global warming could change summer in Washington, D.C., from merely miserable to nearly unbearable, the Washington Post reported recently. By the year 2050, the so-called greenhouse effect and other climatic changes could cause temperatures to top 100 degrees a dozen times a year. And maybe palms will sprout along the banks of the Potomac. USDA Contact: Norton Strommen (202) 447-9805.

SAFEGUARDING THE FOOD SUPPLY -- A number of bills dealing with food safety were introduced into the 101st Congress. USDA Economist Tanya Roberts tries to put the issue into perspective with a new publication: "The Economics of Safeguarding the U.S. Food Supply." New tests reveal that micro-organisms are a more common cause of foodborne disease than most Americans suspect. And, new convenience foods such as precooked entrees for reheating at home or in restaurants pose new food safety problems. Contact: Tanya Roberts (202) 786-1864.



FARM PROGRESS SHOW NETWORK -- The Agri-Business Radio Network, Indianapolis, Ind., will form a syndicated radio network for the 1989 Farm Progress Show, which will be held in Rochester, Ind., Sept. 25-28. Contact: Jim Walton (317) 848-4404.

FARM EQUIPMENT DEMAND STRONG -- At a farm-equipment dealership in Melvin, Ill., demand for new four-wheel-drive tractors is so brisk customers who ordered in late July won't get delivery until September, according to a recent New York Times. Farm machinery sales are expected to increase for the third consecutive year, rising from \$6 billion in 1988 to \$6.2 to \$6.7 billion in 1989. Greater demand for larger horsepower tractors has increased the average size of new tractors from 90 hp in 1986 to 95 hp in 1988, according to the Ag Resources report. Contact: Herman Delvo (202) 786-1456.

WHY FARMERS ARE "RIGHT-EARED" -- When farmers turn their heads to the right to watch the equipment towed behind their tractors, they expose their left ears to engine noise. Thus, Audiologist James Lankford of Northern Illinois University, found 47 percent of those he tested had some overall hearing loss. What to do? Ear plugs and regular hearing tests could help, Lankford says. Sealing sound leaks in tractor and combine cabs and shutting doors and windows can reduce noise by 20 decibels, enough to prevent permanent hearing damage. Contact: James Lankford (815) 753-6157.

EMBRY NOMINATED FOR MARCONI -- The National Association of Broadcasters Radio '89 Convention Steering Committee has nominated Dink Embry (WHOP-AM, Hopkinsville, Ky.) as a finalist in the first Marconi Radio Awards program. Embry is one of five finalists in the Small Market Personality of the Year category. The new NAB Marconi Radio Awards will be presented by Dick Clark Sept. 16 in New Orleans, during the NAB conference.

NEW WAY TO FIND A RIPE MELON -- An experimental breadbox-sized meter can tell whether melons are ripe by shooting infrared light into the fruit. The device is 35 percent accurate in measuring the sugar and ripeness in cantaloupe, honeydew and watermelons, says USDA Chemist Gerald Dull, who is perfecting the meter. "The amount of light absorbed by the fruit is a measure of its sugar content," he said. "The more infrared absorbed, the sweeter the fruit." Contact: Gerald Dull (404) 546-3320.

GOURMET SLUG FARE -- How about a can of "Whole Bodied Slugs ... Packed in Water for Low-Sodium Diets?" Or maybe you'd prefer your slugs "kitchen sliced, Cajun-Style in Louisiana Hot Sauce." Slyme Tyme, Ltd., of Portland, Ore., has taken advantage of the temperate, sometimes soggy Pacific Northwest as the ideal place for Slug Ranching. They even produce canned "Slug Chowder, New England Style." The labels warn the buyer "DO NOT ADD SALT!" In smaller type: "Actual contents listed under this label." Contact: Slyme Tyme on (503) 265-8535.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1649 -- Fires in the western states have consumed over a million acres of forestland. The long-range forecast indicates there is no relief until October, which leaves the potential for the 1989 fire season to be as severe as last year's. Maria Bynum reports on the situation & the efforts to prevent forest fires. (Weekly 13-1/2 min. documentary)

CONSUMER TIME #1161 -- Forest fire safety; ice milk makes a comeback; the shopping experience; an adult cultural exchange program; sex education via video. (Weekly reel of news features)

AGRITAPE #1668 -- USDA News Highlights; 1990 farm program common provisions; disaster bill; U.S. trade proposal, "tariffication;" new rules for pesticide use. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 - 3 min. features)

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Mon., Aug. 21, catfish; Tues., Aug. 22, crop/weather update, food outlook; Wed., Aug. 23, cranberry production, vegetable outlook; Thurs., Aug. 24, poultry production, wheat outlook; Fri., Aug. 25, export outlook; Tues., Aug. 29, crop/weather update, agricultural income & finance; Wed., Aug. 30, dairy outlook (yearbook); Thurs., Aug. 31, ag prices, world tobacco situation, cotton, wool yearbook.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m. EDT each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

USDA TV NEWS SERVICE -- (Aug. 10, 12 & 14) USDA Economist Jim Schaub on soybean outlook; USDA Economist Boyd Buxton on fruit production; Martin "Buzz" Fitzpatrick, administrator of USDA's Office of Transportation, on a labeling proposal of anhydrous ammonia; George Winegar of USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service, on Chinese pig research; USDA Economist LeRoy Hansen on machinery sales; USDA Economist Ray Nightingale on world food needs; USDA meteorologist Ray Motha with a weather update; and TV Features on "Scouts Learn Conservation" and "Dutch Elm Disease."

NEXT WEEK: Chris Larson reports on honey exports.

Available on satellite Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY 7:30-7:45 p.m., EDT, Transponder 12D

SATURDAY 10:30-11:15 a.m., EDT, Transponder 10D

MONDAY 8:30-9:15 a.m., EDT, Transponder 12D

(Repeat of Saturday transmission)

OFF MIKE

GRAPES ... in Western New York state are looking good this year. I spent my vacation in my hometown of Westfield, N.Y., which is located in western New York. The grape growers are looking for a good harvest, although too much rain is causing mold problems.

CONSUMERS ... are still calling Welch's Grape Coop. about the safety of the fruit and fruit products they are eating. My friend, Carolyn Bills, who handles those calls from her office in Westfield says food safety continues to be the prime concern of the callers to their hotline.

DAIRY ... farmers in Chautauqua County, N.Y., are not looking favorably upon the new BST hormone. Dennis Webster (WJTN, Jamestown, N.Y.) says he is not hearing a lot of favorable response to the bovine growth hormone from dairy farmers in his area.

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DROUGHT ... continues in areas of Kansas. Kelly Lenz (WIBW, Topeka, Kans.) says they recently got a good hard rain but weather patterns remain spotty. Dryland corn looks like it's written off in some areas. Kelly says a lot of producers are living "shower to shower." Mostly north central and northeastern Kansas are still "bone dry" in many areas. Last year a lot of wheat was planted in the dust and producers hope it won't have to be planted that way this year. Only four to six weeks until winter wheat crop is planted.

VIC ... Powell (Chief, USDA R&TV) is on vacation, probably doing his favorite pastime of "hang gliding" somewhere in New England.

BRENDA CURTIS-HEIKEN

Acting Chief, Radio and Television Division